

HEAD et al
Appl. No. 10/584,128
May 12, 2008

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AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

1-10 (cancelled).

11 (currently amended). A method for connecting a portion of an external surface of a first tubular element ~~and~~ with a portion of an internal surface of a second tubular element comprising:

plasma spraying said portion of one or both of said external surface of said first tubular element and said internal surface of said second tubular element with hard angular material to at least partially coat said portion of one or both of said external surface and said internal surface and form protuberances on one or both of said portion of said external surface and said portion of said internal surface.

locating a portion of the external surface of the first tubular element within a portion of the internal surface of the second tubular element, wherein protuberances are present on one or both of said portion of said external surface of said first tubular element and said portion of said internal surface of said second tubular element.

expanding the portion of the external surface of the first tubular element and/or compressing the portion of the internal surface of the second tubular element to form a connection resulting from the interference between the external surface of the portion of the first tubular element and the internal surface of the portion of the second tubular element and protuberances present on one or both of said portion of said external

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surface of said first tubular element and said portion of said internal surface of said second tubular element;

~~in which, prior to assembly, one or both of the external surface of the portion of the first tubular element and the internal surface of the portion of the second tubular element is/are at least partially coated with hard angular material, wherein the hard angular material is applied to the external surface of the portion of the first tubular element and/or the internal surface of the portion of the second tubular element by plasma spraying to form protuberances on the surface.~~

12 (previously presented). A method as claimed in claim 11 in which a mask is used to form the protuberances.

13 (previously presented). A method as claimed in claim 12 in which a foraminous mask is placed over at least part of the external surface of the portion of the first tubular element and/or part of the internal surface of the portion of the second tubular element before the surface is sprayed such that the plasma spray passes through holes in the mask, forming protuberances on the surface of the surface when the mask is removed.

14 (previously presented). A method as claimed in claim 11 in which part of the portion of the first tubular element and a corresponding part of the portion of the second tubular element are not coated by plasma spraying such that when the connection is expanded these bare metal parts form a metal-to-metal seal.

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15 (previously presented). A method as claimed in claim 11 in which two pipes are connected by locating one end of each of the pipes over a pin of a male/male connector and within the box of a female/female connector and expanding the internal diameter of the male/male connector.

16 (previously presented). A method as claimed in claim 11 in which at least one element designed to be embedded in the surfaces as the connection is expanded is located between the external surface of the portion of the first tubular element and/or part of the internal surface of the portion of the second tubular element.

17 (previously presented). A method for connecting piping used in oil and gas boreholes which method comprises connecting pipes together as claimed in claim 11, lowering the pipe string into the borehole and subsequently radially expanding the pipe string downhole.

18 (previously presented). An expandable tubular element suitable for forming connections by a method as claimed in claim 11 having protuberances on a part of its surface adjacent at least one end thereof which have been formed by plasma spraying a hard angular material.

19 (previously presented). An expandable tubular element as claimed in claim 18 which is a male/male coupling comprising two pin connectors the plasma sprayed

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protuberances being on the external surfaces of the pin connectors.

20 (previously presented). An expandable tubular element as claimed in claim 18 which is a female/female coupling comprising two box connectors the plasma sprayed protuberances being on the internal surfaces of the box connectors.